

Daily Thai News Summary: 24 September 2015

1. Thilawa SEZ officially opened in “first step” towards industrialization in Myanmar

Source: **The Nation** ([Link](#))

High-profile figures from Myanmar and Japan yesterday joined the grand opening of the Thilawa Special Economic Zone in Myanmar, hailing it as the first step in the country's path towards industrial modernisation. Among them were Taro Aso, Japan's deputy prime minister and finance minister; Yosuke Takagi, Japan's minister for economy, trade and industry; and Myanmar Vice President Nyan Tun. *"Our ambition for Thilawa is far beyond other SEZs. In order to meet our expectations, we have come up with new concepts, new policies, and new ideas to create a favourable, friendly investment climate for both local and foreign investors,"* Nyan Tun said.

Set Aung, chairman of the Thilawa SEZ Management Committee and deputy governor of Myanmar's central bank, said the government was making efforts to ensure that Thilawa SEZ can be the best example and model for all SEZs to follow. *"We are trying to make SEZs very different [from other industrial zones] and productive. We are making sure that all the SEZs will follow the Thilawa model and are going to be special as well,"* he said.

To date, Thilawa has welcomed 44 foreign companies from 12 countries and regions, including four from Thailand. Nearly half, 23, are from Japan. Others are from Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, mainland China, Hong Kong, Sweden, the United States, South Korea and Vietnam. This is on top of four Myanmar companies. Of a total of 48 companies, 37 are in the manufacturing sector.

2. Chinese top MICE visitors to Thailand last year

Source: **The Nation** ([Link](#))

China became the leading MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) source market for Thailand last year, with more than 120,000 business travelers entering the Kingdom and contributing Bt10.6 billion to the economy, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau said recently.

Reporting during the bureau-hosted *"Thailand CONNECT the World: China MICE Commemorative Dinner"* at a Shanghai hotel on September 17, TCEB marketing and corporate image department director Parichat Svetasreni said that in the 2014 fiscal year, the number of Chinese business-event visitors was the largest among the combined 919,164 foreign MICE

visitors to Thailand, who generated Bt80.8 billion in total. The trend has continued during the first three quarters of the 2015 fiscal year, with 71,462 Chinese business travellers to Thailand, contributing Bt6.28 billion to the Kingdom's economy.

3. New terms for year's seventh rice auction

Source: **Bangkok Post** ([Link](#))

Authorities have pledged to closely supervise the government's next auction of rice stockpiles to limit any negative effect on domestic prices and protect the reputation of Thai rice. Duangporn Rodphaya, director-general of the Foreign Trade Department, said provincial officials were expected to complete the inspection of rice stored at 1,800 warehouses nationwide by mid-October as ordered by the National Rice Policy Committee chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha.

The committee earlier this month assigned provincial officials to complete their inspection in 30 days to verify the exact amount of good-quality and rotten rice in the 13.5 million tonnes the state holds. The findings will help the government decide on proper pricing for sale, after some critics said auction prices were too low.

4. Baiyoke in B1 bn expansion

Source: **Bangkok Post** ([Link](#))

Baiyoke Group plans to spend over 1 billion baht to expand its hotel and food business from now until next year. The lion's share will be spent on building Bangkok Midtown hotel on a 10-rai plot on Phetchaburi Road. The 100-room budget hotel targeting Chinese tourists is due to open in the middle of next year, said Jarujit Baiyoke, assistant to the chairman of Baiyoke Group. After that the group will start the construction of a four-star hotel with 80 rooms on Ratchadaphisek Road by the end of next year.

Baiyoke also plans to hold the grand opening of Baiyoke Seacoast Samui in tambon Bophut, Koh Samui next year. The group took over the resort from the wife of Mitsuo Shibahashi, formerly known as Phra Mitsuo Gavesako.

5. Home buyers to get loan assistance

Source: **The Nation** ([Link](#))

Short-term measures to help house buyers secure bank loans, which will in turn stimulate the real estate and construction sectors, will be announced in two weeks, Finance Minister Apisak Tantivorawong has revealed. However, the implementation of the Land and Construction tax is still in limbo and the minister declined to reveal when it will come into effect.

Meanwhile, if the introduction of a nationwide e-payment initiative is fully implemented and businesses are encouraged to have only one financial account, value-added tax (VAT) will not have to be increased from 7 to 10 per cent as recommended by the Revenue Department.

Apisak said the real problem in the real estate sector at the moment is that people who can afford to buy a house cannot secure loan approval because the banks are reluctant to give out loans during an economic slowdown. *"This is truly a matter that should not have been publicised [by the press] as nothing has changed and it has not been finalised. It will cause panic and people will delay their decision [on buying a house] and that is not a good thing,"* he said at the Finance Ministry. *"We want this matter to be finalised in two weeks' time because we do not want the uncertainty surrounding the issue to persist any more and we expect the construction and property sectors to benefit from the introduction of the measures,"* he added.

By Harsha Hazarika